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WHAT ABOUT FOREIGN LANGUAGES.
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THE IMPORTANCE OF LEARNING A FOREIGN LANGUAGE IS STRESSED IN A BRIEF BROCHURE DESIGNED FOR STUDENTS OF ALL LEVELS, PARENTS, TEACHERS, COUNSELORS, AND ADMINISTRATORS. INFORMATION IS GIVEN ON WHEN TO BEGIN A LANGUAGE, THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING ABLE TO SPEAK A LANGUAGE, USES FOR A FOREIGN LANGUAGE AT HOME, LANGUAGE JOB OPPORTUNITIES, AND LANGUAGE LEARNING AND THE NATIONAL INTEREST. A BIBLIOGRAPHY SUGGESTS SOURCES FOR FURTHER INFORMATION. (AF)

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FOREWORD

There has been a growing awareness in Minnesota of the need for persons to learn languages which has been evidenced by the great increases in enrollments during the past ten years. The secondary foreign language enrollments for the 1958 - 1959 school year were 21,150 and for the 1966 - 1967 school year – 62,952, an increase of 198 per cent. This great interest has resulted in improved teacher education, methods of teaching, textbooks, equipment, and materials.

In spite of this increase in enrollments and improvement of programs and instruction, a large percentage of the school population is still not participating in the foreign language program.

Recognizing this, the State Foreign Language Advisory Committee in 1965 recommended that a future committee consideration should be to assemble a brochure stressing the reasons why students should elect to learn a foreign language. This brochure is the result of that recommendation. It is intended for students at all levels and their parents, teachers, counselors, and administrators.

Percy Fearing

Consultant

Modern Foreign Languages

The most important reason for learning a foreign language, one you don't often read or hear about, is to help you develop an ATTITUDE which will lead to UNDERSTANDING and COMMUNICATION.

If we look at one way of doing something long enough, we begin to assume that it is right and that any other way is wrong, odd, backward, or funny.

Let's see. Which of these people do you think is dressed "correctly"? Do the others look strange, quaint, or uncomfortable? Each person pictured below probably thinks that he is dressed correctly because he is wearing the clothes of his country.

Can you discover, by learning a foreign language, that another person's point of view makes just as much sense as yours? Let's see.

Which of these two addresses looks correct to you? Does one look backwards?

First:

628 Oak Street

You may think the second address looks strange.

But . . .

. . . you usually look first for the street and then for the number, don't you? Could it be that the other person's way is more logical?

Second:

Eichenstr. 628

We say, "It's a red book." But the (book)
Spanish speaker says, "Es un libro
(red)
rojo."

Because we are used to our own way, we English speakers feel that the speaker of Spanish is somewhat strange to reverse the word order. A Spaniard would smile and ask, "But before the book can be red, you must have the book, no?"

LOOK AT THIS PICTURE . . .

GERMAN
Gut. Jetzt haben wir alle unser Wild - und am ersten Tag der Jagdzeit.
SPANISH
¡Claro! hombre! Hay que recogerlos. ¡Pobre José! Tan cansado que no puede ayudarnos.

Guess what the men are saying . . . Do you think there is any possibility that you misunderstood? Can a complication arise if the men don't understand each other? Can appearances be misleading? Now turn to page 11 to find out what they're saying.

PATERNAL SIDE:

far – father

farfar – grandfather

farmor – grandmother

faster – aunt

farbror – uncle

The Swedish language has different words for relatives on the mother's side. Your mother's mother is your MORMOR, since MOR is the word for mother. But your father's mother is your FARMOR, since FAR is the word for father. Do you think this is funny? Don't you think that maybe it's a good idea to make this distinction?

MATERNAL SIDE:

mor – mother

mormor – grandmother

morfar – grandfather

moster – aunt

morbror – uncle

If you say "my cousin", we can't tell if you mean a girl or a boy. However, the French have one word for "girl cousin" – COUSINE and one for "boy cousin" – COUSIN. They can just as easily distinguish between male and female friends – AMI is male; AMIE is female – students, children, workers, Americans, musicians, and many more. Kind of helps, doesn't it?

Is it important to understand this in today's world? Yes, Read on.

when do you start?

In order to use the language you study, you will have to be able to understand what you hear, ask and answer questions, and read and write a little. This takes some time and practice. You can't expect to achieve it all in two years of high school. Starting a language is in a way like learning to shoot free throws or dribble a basketball, or play a musical instrument, or bake cookies without burning them. It takes practice (which can be fun if it's done right,) but you end up with the satisfaction of being able to do something you couldn't do before. Start early, since young people have sharp hearing and can imitate sound easily.

why are the sounds of language so important?

Language is really sounds; it's what people say, how they understand and answer each other. Writing is merely a means of presenting what is said and it's limited in the way it does this. Try reading these out loud:

ミネソタ州は一万以上の湖が有り
美しくて住よい所である

Qu'est-ce que c' est?

Look at these words in English and decide if you have to know the sound first:

COUGH, TOUGH, BOUGH, THOUGH, THROUGH

Look carefully at these:

ON, TON, ONE, WON, OWN;

HOME, COME, COMB, BOMB, TOMB;

ARE, HARE, HERE, EAR, HERD, HEAR, HEARD, HEART;

KERNEL, COLONEL ? ?

then translation isn't enough?

As easy as it is to let someone else try to put the foreign language into English, you can't learn to understand or communicate if you rely on translation. There are words and feelings which don't translate into English. To understand how people feel, you have to be able to understand what they are saying.

will we meet people who speak a foreign language?

We all know the world is shrinking. People are circulating more easily from country to country. You may vacation in other countries, go to school, or even work there. More and more people from other countries will be visiting the United States. Many young people come to this country each year to study. Perhaps in your school you have an American Field Service student or a student from some other international exchange program. And there are millions of our fellow Americans who speak a foreign language as well as or better than they speak English. Our country is really a melting pot of people who came here to live and are still arriving every day from all over the world.

are there other uses for a foreign language at home?

Certainly. You'll surely see foreign movies, and you'll watch television shows and sports events broadcast from foreign countries and sent here by satellite communications. Turn on a short wave radio tonight and see how many languages you can hear. And don't forget the millions of people in the United States who speak some other language.

what are the job opportunities?

They are many and varied. Thousands of Americans each year work in countries all over the world with the Armed Services, Peace Corps, World Health Organization, United Nations, United States Department of State, and religious and other private groups. Some are assigned; many are volunteers. This can be a profitable, rewarding, and broadening experience. But often it's the combination of language and a skill which is most valuable. Stewardesses, engineers, secretaries, foreign service personnel, teachers, scientists, pilots, newspaper and television correspondents, missionaries, and many others may find that their skill with a foreign language can make one person as valuable as two. But you can't wait until the opportunity is offered and then start to learn the language.

will you ever have to take a foreign language?

Educators recognize the importance of being able to understand and communicate with others. In many school systems in our country everyone has some foreign language experience, often beginning in elementary or junior high school. Colleges and universities, recognizing the importance of foreign language study in today's world, are requiring more years of language study for entrance and/or graduation. If you are planning to go on to college, you should know that at many colleges foreign language study is an ENTRANCE requirement, and that most colleges require that you've studied a foreign language for a certain number of years before you graduate. Your counselor will be aware of this. But the objective should be to start early and continue long enough to gain a usable skill instead of merely to fulfill a requirement.

which language should you study?

If we knew which language would be most useful to you two years from now, this question would be easy to answer. But most of us don't. To help you decide, take a look at the world, its languages, and your future. Then, as you study, you will begin to understand how languages work. This understanding and the skills you learn will make it easier to learn any other languages you might need later.

who should take a foreign language?

IN GENERAL, EVERYONE CAN PROFIT FROM SOME CONTACT WITH A FOREIGN LANGUAGE. IF YOU SPEAK ENGLISH SO THAT PEOPLE CAN UNDERSTAND YOU, THEN YOU CAN LEARN TO SPEAK ANOTHER LANGUAGE – IF YOU WANT TO.

will it help my english?

At a certain point, one of the real values of learning another language is a better awareness of how English works. Many people say they never really understood their own language until they tried to learn another. You'll probably also discover a lot about our country and our way of life as you study about another culture.

how is foreign language learning in the national interest?

Did you ever stop to think that every American is an ambassador of his country when he is in a foreign land? When many Americans are abroad, they don't realize that they make a bad impression if they don't try to understand the "strange" ways of the foreigners. Of course, if you can speak the other person's language, you can ask him about himself and his way of doing things and begin to communicate as an insider and not as a stranger. Communication is the key to understanding: from individual to individual, from group to group, and from country to country.

so what are you waiting for?

Get out and get started making yourself the kind of ambassador you think this country ought to have! Learn to understand the differences, learn about other peoples, and learn to respect them. Learn another language, and learn it well.

What they're saying on page 3 . . .

GERMAN
GOOD. NOW WE'VE ALL GOT OUR DEER - AND ON THE FIRST DAY OF THE SEASON.
SPANISH
RIGHT. NOW TO PICK THEM UP. POOR JOE! HE'S SO TIRED THAT HE CAN'T HELP US.

Surprised? Does familiarity with the language help with understanding? Even with the best of intentions, poor communication can lead to a lot of trouble, can't it?

WANT TO FIND OUT MORE?

BOOKS

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Huebener, Theodore. WHY JOHNNY SHOULD LEARN FOREIGN LANGUAGES. Chilton, 1961. $4.00 (407)

Pei, Mario. HOW TO LEARN LANGUAGES AND WHAT LANGUAGES TO LEARN. Harper, 1966. $5.95. (407)

CURRICULUM GUIDE

Minnesota State Department of Education. A GUIDE FOR INSTRUCTION IN MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES: Grades 4-12. Curriculum Bulletin No. 27. The Department, 1965. $3.45. Available from State of Minnesota, Documents Section, 140 Centennial Building, St. Paul, Minnesota 55101

PUBLICATIONS FROM THE MODERN LANGUAGE ASSOCIATION

All of the below may be obtained from Materials Center, Modern Language Association, 4 Washington Place, New York, New York 10003

ADVICE TO THE LANGUAGE LEARNER, by Donald D. Walsh. MODERN LANGUAGE JOURNAL, May 1963. 10¢ each; packet of 25, 50¢

FOREIGN LANGUAGE DISCUSSION PAMPHLETS. Collection of eight pamphlets prepared for the U.S. National Commission for UNESCO. $1.00

FOREIGN LANGUAGE ENTRANCE AND DEGREE REQUIREMENTS IN U.S. INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION, by Gladys A. Lund and Nina Greer Herslow. 1966. $1.00

FOREIGN LANGUAGE IN THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PACKET. Sixteen items which provide background reading for the teacher or school official interested in the rationale and problems of the teaching of foreign language in the elementary school. Rev. 1966 $2.50

FOREIGN LANGUAGES AND YOUR CAREER. U.S. Department of Labor, 1966. Free

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES AND YOUR CHILD, by Marjorie C. Johnston and Elizabeth Keesee. U.S. Office of Education, 1964. 25¢

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES IN THE HIGH SCHOOL, ed. by Marjorie C. Johnston. U.S. Office of Education, 1962. $1.00

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